

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

March 20, 2012

6:00 PM

Old McDonald's Fish Camp

The Edgefield County Council held a Listening Tour meeting at 6:00 P. M. Tuesday, March 20, 2012, at Old McDonald's Fish Camp located at 355 Currytown Road, North Augusta, SC.

Members present

Dean Campbell, Chair

Genia Blackwell, Vice Chair

Rodney Ashcraft, Councilman

Willie Bright, Councilman

Others present

Lynn Strom, County Administrator

Jennifer Gilley, Clerk to Council

and others as per list attached

Absent

Norman Dorn, Councilman

Michael Medlock, County Attorney

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order and told the citizens in attendance that County and staff were there to listen to any comments and answer any questions that the public may have.

Comments from the public

Chairman Campbell started the meeting by saying thank you to Jerry Bass for letting us use his restaurant to hold a meeting. Councilwoman Blackwell also thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She said that she understands that sometimes Merriwether may feel like they are being ignored but she wanted to let the citizens know that this County Council does care and is actively trying to work harder for the Merriwether Community. Councilman Ashcraft reinforced the fact that this Council and Edgefield County staff are already looking at several ways to improve the Southern end of the County. Mr. Jerry Bass stated that one improvement he was excited about was the paving of Mealing Road from Sweetwater Road to Country Club Hills Road. Another gentleman stated that he heard the entrance to Thurmond Road was going to be moved for safety purposes and asked if this road would be paved. Council confirmed his statement but added that it would not be paved. Another citizen asked several questions about the Edgefield County School District (ECSD) and the redistricting process for the 2010 census. Chairman Campbell told him that he would need to speak with the School Board about the ECSD redistricting process but added that County Council had already redrawn their lines and have been approved by the Department of Justice. Another citizen in attendance asked what was going to be done with the property located on Murrah Road that was purchased by the City of North Augusta. Council responded by saying that the City of North Augusta is planning to build a \$12 million dollar park. Mrs. Lynn Strom added that the plans for the park can be found on the City of North Augusta's website. Mr. Roy Blackwell asked if the Rails to Trials project that was approved with the Edgefield County 2012 Strategic Plan would tie into this park. Councilwoman Blackwell answered him by saying yes that this was part of the plan and that as long as we are using the abandoned railroad system, it cannot be annexed into North Augusta. Chairman Campbell added that preventative plans are being looked into since it will become a high traffic area and more audible. He stated that he wants this park

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to benefit Edgefield County and Council along with other Edgefield County staff are working hard to be sure that this is successful for everyone involved. Another citizen stated that she thought more Edgefield County citizens would be using the North Augusta (NA) City Park since there is not a park in the Merriwether area. She stated that a large percentage of funding for the Recreation Department would be going to NA City Park for recreation fees instead of Edgefield County. Councilwoman Blackwell stated that County Council understood that this would be a negative impact for Edgefield County and that Council was looking into trying to find a way to offset this negative impact, but essentially there was nothing Edgefield County could do to stop North Augusta from building a park. The citizen continued by saying that "our" tax dollars are paying to lease Bettis Academy Park and she felt "our" tax dollars would be better spent on a park owned by Edgefield County. Chairman Campbell replied by saying that Edgefield County just couldn't build a \$12 million dollar park to compete with the new NA City Park and that we just needed to give the new park time and see what happens. He said after everyone has had a chance to see the new park and get a feel for it then Council would discuss what needed to be done for the parks in Edgefield County. Another citizen asked if Edgefield County residents would be able to get a discount on the registration fees since the park will be located in Edgefield County. Councilwoman Blackwell said that there had been discussion on the fees but nothing had been decided at this time. Councilman Ashcraft added that the fees would need to be competitive or the Edgefield County residents would use Bettis Academy instead of the NA City Park. Councilman Bright added that the Bettis Academy Park is worth approximately \$3 million dollars. Another citizen wanted to know what Edgefield County was going to do to stop North Augusta from developing property in Edgefield County in the future. Chairman Campbell responded by saying that if NA City wants to purchase property in Edgefield County, there is nothing that we can do to stop them. He then added that NA City cannot force anyone to be annexed into North Augusta. Mrs. Linda Anderson stated that at one point the developers had a large incentive to be annexed into NA City due to the availability of water and sewer connections. She said that that incentive has gone down now that Edgefield County has started the sewer project in that area of the County. Councilwoman Blackwell added that Edgefield County is going to be expanding the Broadband and Cellular service in that area as well. One citizen stated that she had concerns about the problems that may arise with the schools since this new developer was talking about 400 new home sites. Chairman Campbell stated that there was nothing County Council could do about problems that may arise with the school system, but that the ECSD was involved in the strategic planning process and they were well aware of the new sewer project that is in progress. Mr. Jerry Bass wondered how long it would be before water and sewer were offered in his area on Currytown Road. Chairman Campbell stated that the reason they decided to put water and sewer on Gregory Lake Road was due to a request from a developer. Also, this location would include other new development that can fund the line through impact fees. One citizen asked about the timeline of the widening of Hwy 25 from the Industrial park to Greenhouse Road and how the expansion of the Bridgestone Plant would affect traffic on this stretch of roadway. He also stated that the speed limit has been reduced to 35MPH and there was still no caution light at this intersection. Councilman Bright stated that the timeline had been changed several times and the money wasn't available as quickly as they thought it would be so it would be a little longer than expected. He also said he wasn't sure what would be done about the intersection and added traffic. The citizen said that he believed a traffic survey/study needed to be done and Chairman Campbell responded by saying that all of this was covered in the 2012 Strategic Plan and would be researched as necessary. Mr. Greg Hurt wanted to know what was being done about the broadband and cellular service in the Merriwether section.

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Councilwoman Blackwell stated that the County was in the beginning stages of this project but they were looking into expanding the service provided and that this is a high priority for County Council. She stated that they want to meet with all of the providers for this area to find the best service for Edgefield County Citizens. One citizen asked if there would be a fire department located in Mount Vintage. Councilman Ashcraft stated that the fire department was looking at land in Mount Vintage and trying to find the best location for the area, whether it would be in the subdivision or close to the subdivision. Chairman Campbell added that with the 2012 Strategic Plan we may be co-locating EMS, the fire department and other emergency responders in that area to better the service and response time. Mrs. Strom briefly went over the funding for the fire departments. Mr. Hurt then asked if the County had started replacing some of the vehicles in the Sheriff's Office. Councilwoman Blackwell said yes that they would be replaced in a staggered 3 year term and the first year's purchase had already been made. Chairman Campbell added that 2 new ambulances had also been purchased this year and we should be receiving them in the next few months. Chairman Campbell asked if there were any other questions or comments and no one had any.

Adjourn

Councilwoman Blackwell made the motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilman Bright. The motion carried unanimously 4-0 with Councilman Dorn absent.

Notice of this meeting was provided to Edgefielddaily.com, The Citizen News, and The Edgefield Advertiser.

Edgefield County Council

Dean Campbell, Chair

ATTEST

Jennifer L. Gilley, Clerk to Council